

## Rewriting Nineteenth-Century New York City for the Modern Teen.

Jennifer Donnelly's 2015 novel *These Shallow Graves* and Katherine Howe's 2015 novel *The Appearance of Annie Van Sinderen* are both set in nineteenth-century New York (with Howe's book spanning the 1830s and the 2010s) and both end with Author's Notes or Acknowledgments that give credit to the Museums and Institutions of New York City for keeping the past alive. Howe, in particular, thanks "The Merchant's House Museum's meticulously preserved 1830s interior" which "allowed me a clear imagination of the inside of Annie's house, and I'm grateful to them for working to preserve the rare heritage of nineteenth-century architecture in New York City." Donnelly, in fact, ends with a Bibliography for future reading, should her teen audience want to know more about subjects such as pickpockets in nineteenth-century New York, the Five Points area, or Edith Wharton. Both authors, it seems, did excellent research into their subject matter, bringing the nineteenth century alive on the page, and using New York City to do so.

Why do young adult novelists spend so much effort to recreate history for contemporary audiences? Further, why would Donnelly end with a Bibliography that assumes her teen audience would *want* to do further historical reading into the subject matter of her text? What we see in these texts is a lovingly recreated New York City that calls attention to the rapidly disappearing architecture, history, and problematics of the city's past. Reading these novels and seeing the history unfold becomes a call to action, a message to be like the Merchant House and "meticulously preserve" nineteenth-century spaces. This paper will argue that the presentation of nineteenth-century New York City in young adult novels such as those by Donnelly and Howe is done so with purpose for the culturally and socially savvy teen consumer who is interested in both past and present. By refreshing this classic space, authors like Donnelly and Howe call attention to the significance of American history, and encourage their teen audiences to reclaim those spaces for cultural preservation.